



Congressman

Ben Cardin

Reports From Washington

FALL 2003

THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, MARYLAND

Dear Friends,

This has been an extremely busy year in Congress. An important issue before us has been the need to provide better support for Americans who devote their lives to protecting and defending us.

From new equipment for police and firefighters to better access to health care for our veterans, we need to ensure that those who protect us receive the resources they need to do the job and the benefits they have been promised. This newsletter examines how we can do a better job of supporting those who protect us.

The back of this newsletter contains a schedule of upcoming Town Hall meetings I am sponsoring this fall. It also features a list of meetings in which I will be discussing the prescription drug bill that is being considered by Congress.

On a personal note, I want to thank the men and women who have served so gallantly in Afghanistan and Iraq. These are difficult times, and my thoughts and prayers are with these soldiers and their families.

Sincerely,

A blue ink handwritten signature that reads "Ben".

Preserving History: The Veterans History Project

The Veterans History Project was created in 2000 by Congress as a way to preserve the personal histories of veterans from World Wars I & II, the Korean War, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf wars.

The project, which is sponsored by the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center, will gather the stories of men and women who served during wartime, in both combat and on the homefront.

For those who want to learn more about the project, please contact: Veterans History Project, Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, 101 Independence Ave., S.E., Washington, D.C. 20540. You can visit the web site at: www.loc.gov/folklife.vets or call toll-free, 1-888-371-5848.



Rep. Cardin tells members of the American Legion Post 183 in Parkville about the need to participate in the Veterans History Project .

Caring For Those Who Protect Us

Veterans: Promises Made

We promised access to quality health care to the men and women who devoted their careers to protecting and defending us. Today, our veterans are aging and are in even greater need of us to keep that promise.

We are failing in that job, and one of the most glaring examples of this failure was the January announcement by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to limit medical care to only certain veterans. In a cost cutting move, some 174,000 "Priority 8" veterans who were not already enrolled in the VA health care system were told that enrollment would be halted on Jan. 17, 2003. In Maryland, more than 2,000 veterans have been affected. This decision is wrong and should be reversed.

In fact, we should be doing more -- not less -- for the men and women on whom we depended for our national security. Recently, I co-sponsored the **Capital Asset Realignment**

for Enhanced Services (CARES) Act, HR2808 which would give Congress 60 days to review any proposal to close a veterans hospital or reduce the number of beds.

We must ensure that cost cutting doesn't result in bad health care for our veterans. Over the past several years, the VA has supplied veterans with higher-dosage medications than necessary, asking them to "split" their pills as a way to save money. I have proposed legislation that would require the VA to follow certain criteria when assessing a veteran's ability to split medications.

A very promising development has been the inclusion of my bill -- **TRICARE Retirees Opportunity Act**, HR 2361 -- in both the Senate and House Medicare reform bills. This bill would waive the late enrollment penalty for military retirees and their spouses who sign up for Medicare Part B between Jan. 1, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2004. It would permit year-round enrollment through 2004 so that retirees can access their **TRICARE for Life** benefits immediately.

First Responders: Resources Needed

Sept. 11, 2001 made us all aware that our nation is not immune to terrorism. Today, we must assume that terrorists will strike again, possibly using even deadlier agents. The challenge is to ensure our first responders - firemen, policemen and health care workers - have the resources they need to get the job done.

As a member of the Homeland Security

Committee, I am very involved in monitoring our nation's homeland security efforts. While we are better prepared than we were before 9/11, we still have a long way to go.

For example, on average, fire departments across the country have only enough radios to equip half the firefighters on a shift and breathing equipment for only one-third. Our nation's police departments do not have the protective gear to secure a site following a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attack, and most public health labs still lack basic equipment and expertise to adequately respond to a chemical or biological attack.

A bipartisan Task Force of the Council on Foreign Relations, headed by former Republican Sen. Warren Rudman, estimates -- at current funding levels -- the United States will fall approximately \$100 billion short of meeting critical emergency responder needs over the next five years. The Task Force also reported that federal agencies are too slow to distribute funds and bureaucratic red tape exists at all levels of government. The Task Force has made some of the following recommendations:

- **The Departments of Homeland Security (DHS) and Health and Human Services (HHS) need to submit a coordinated plan for identifying national preparedness standards;**

- **DHS and HHS need to work with state and local officials to define standards of emergency preparedness;**

Rep. Cardin joins Mayor Martin O'Malley and Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger in detailing the need for additional homeland security funding for Maryland.

- **Congress should establish a system for allocating resources based on addressing identified threats and vulnerabilities, not on political considerations;**

- **Congress should make emergency responder grants on a multi-year basis to allow for long-term planning and training;**

- **Congress should require DHS to work with other federal agencies to streamline the homeland security grant program, and;**

- **States should develop a prioritized list of requirements in order to ensure that federal funding is allocated in a way that provides the best return on investments.**

Our nation's local emergency responders will play the central role in managing the immediate consequences of any future terrorist attack. We have the responsibility to provide them with the equipment, training, and other resources they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.



Rep. Cardin talks with Brig. Gen. Warner I. Sumpter at the Fifth Regiment Armory about the deployment of Maryland reservists.



Meet Your Congressman

Seminar For Businesses

**"Doing Business with the
U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security"**

Space limited; free registration:
www.house.gov/cardin or 410-433-8886

Monday, Oct. 27 from 2-5 p.m.
Howard Community College,
Business Technology Center
6751 Gateway Dr., Columbia

Veterans Town Hall

***Retiree Benefits**

***VA Benefits**

***Health Care**

Wednesday, Nov. 5 at 7:30 p.m.
VFW Harry L. Cooper Post #160
2597 Dorsey Rd.,
Glen Burnie

• **Elkridge Senior Center**

Monday, Oct. 20 at 10:30 a.m.
6540 Washington Blvd.

• **Hannah More School**

Monday, Oct. 20 at 8 p.m.
12035 Reisterstown Road,
Reisterstown

• **Parkville Senior Center**

Monday, Oct. 20 at 1 p.m.
8601 Harford Road

• **Annapolis Library**

Thursday, Oct. 23 at 7 p.m.
1410 West St.

• **John Booth Senior Center**

Monday, Oct. 27 at 12:30 p.m.
229-1/2 Eaton St.,
Baltimore City

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